

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 IO-14 PM-07 NSC-07 SPC-03 SS-20

RSC-01 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 EB-11 DRC-01

/101 W

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P 051709Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8425

S E C R E T LONDON 02785

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: THE BRITISH GENERAL ELECTION

FROM AMBASSADOR ANNENBERG

1. I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE OUTCOME OF LAST WEEK'S GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITAIN.
2. PRIME MINISTER HEATH GAMBLED THAT THE BRITISH ELECTORATE SHARED HIS OWN SENSE OF DISCIPLINE AND PURPOSE AND WOULD RETURN HIS GOVERNMENT WITH A CLEAR MANDATE THAT WOULD ENABLE IT TO TAKE THE FIRM ACTION NEEDED TO CONTROL INFLATION. HE LOST HIS GAMBLE AND OFFICE. THE OUTCOME WAS UNSATISFACTORY TO BOTH MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE.
3. COLLECTIVELY, THE VOTE SEEMED TO EXPRESS NO SENSE OF NATIONAL INTENT, ALTHOUGH WITH SO MANY INDIVIDUAL DECISIONS INVOLVED IN VOTING FOR MORE THAN 2,000 CANDIDATES IN 635 CONSTITUENCIES, IT IS HAZARDOUS TO GENERALIZE. UNFORTUNATELY, IN THE ABSENCE OF A NATIONAL CONSENSUS THAT ADVANTAGES AND DEPRIVATIONS ARE SHARED FAIRLY, MANY PEOPLE REJECT THE NECESSITY FOR NATIONAL DISCIPLINE. THEY ARE SO PREOCCUPIED WITH THEIR OWN

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ECONOMIC INTERESTS THAT THEY GIVE LITTLE THOUGHT TO

BROADER NATIONAL INTERESTS.

4.COMPOUNDINGTHESE PREOCCUPATIONS SO DEEP-ROOTED IN CLASS DIFFERENCES, ARE THE SELF-CENTERED FORCES OF NATIONALISM. THE SURPRISINGLY LARGE NUMBER OF SCOTTISH AND WELSH NATIONALIST MPS WHO WERE ELECTED, AND THE SUCCESSES OF THE ULSTER UNIONISTS, SUGGEST THAT MANY VOTERS OUTSIDE ENGLAND ARE MORE CONCERNED WITH REGIONAL INTERESTS THAN WITH THE BRITISH NATIONAL INTEREST.

5. THERE IS URGENT NEED FOR STRONG AND COHERENT GOVERNMENT ACTION TO GET THIS COUNTRY GOING AGAIN -- TO SETTLE THE MINERS' DISPUTE, RETURN THE COUNTRY TO A FIVE-DAY WEEK, MANAGE THE APPALLING BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DEFICIT, AND INSTILL AN ELEMENT OF HARMONY INTO INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS. THE NEW LABOR GOVERNMENT WILL BE A MINORITY ADMINISTRATION RESTING ON THE SUFFERANCE OF A HANDFUL OF FRINGE ELEMENTS AND AN UNTESTED LIBERAL PARTY. GOVERNING THE COUNTRY WILL THEREFORE BE DIFFICULT, AND THE NEXT GOVERNMENT WILL BE AT BEST AN INTERIM ADMINISTRATION.

6. THE GOVERNMENT WILL FIND THE BIG INTERNATIONAL DECISIONS HARD TO TAKE, BUT, BY THE SAME TOKEN, IT MAY BE QUICKER TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATIVE INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS, ESPECIALLY IN THE ECONOMIC AND ENERGY FIELDS. I THINK THAT OUR OWN GOVERNMENT MUST TAKE A PATIENT AND CIRCUMSPECT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE NEW BRITISH GOVERNMENT, REALIZING ITS FRAGILITY AND PROBABLY TEMPORARY STAY IN OFFICE. WE SHOULD THEREFORE USE THE TIME LABOR HAS IN OFFICE TO DO SOME CONSTRUCTIVE AND PERSUASIVE WORK IN HELPING TO SHAPE LABOR PARTY ATTITUDES ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY THAT IT MIGHT LATER RETURN TO OFFICE WITH A CLEAR MAJORITY.

7. IF THERE IS ACUTE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AHEAD FOR THE BRITISH PEOPLE, AS I REGRET TO SAY MAY WELL BE THE CASE, I STRONGLY HOPE THAT IT WILL PRODUCE A COLLECTIVE
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WILLINGNESS TO FACE HARD CHOICES, AND THAT THE BRITISH PEOPLE WILL PUT NATIONAL INTEREST AHEAD OF PERSONAL, SECTIONAL, OR CLASS INTERESTS. THERE MAY BE DARK DAYS AHEAD FOR BRITAIN, BUT IT HAS RISEN TO CHALLENGE BEFORE, AND I TRUST IT CAN DO SO AGAIN.

8. DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS AS DESIRED.

ANNENBERG

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, NATIONALISM, NATIONAL ELECTIONS, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, SELFDETERMINATION, LABOR STRIKES, BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DEFICITS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 MAR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LONDON02785
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740368/aaaackur.tel
Line Count: 116
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19-Jul-2001 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <28 JAN 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE BRITISH GENERAL ELECTION FROM AMBASSADOR ANNENBERG
TAGS: PINT, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005